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SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY - JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/03): THE
FUTURE OF THE PEACE PROCESS: OBAMA VS. MCCAIN

Main Stories:

Al Quds and Al Ayyam continue reporting on Palestinian Authority President Abbas' visit to the White House. The front page stories highlight statements by Abbas that, "the last meeting with the U.S. President was positive." Abbas continues, "[Bush] expressed his wish to establish a Palestinian state by the end of this year... If the conditions for peace are present, an agreement can be reached with Israel in two days... We hope that the latest statements by the Israeli Premier will be considered a down-payment for [progress in negotiations with] the incoming Israeli Government." Al Ayyam also reports that PLO negotiator Sa'eb Erekat confirmed that President Bush will not blame any party if an agreement is not reached between Israel and the Palestinians by the end of the year.

The upcoming Quartet meeting is front page news in the dailies. Reports note that the Quartet will meet with representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams to discuss the status of peace talks. The papers also highlight the Quartet announcement that a peace conference will be held in Moscow next spring.

The U.S. provision of F35 fighter jets to Israel makes headlines in Al Quds and the on-line Maan network. Quoting Israeli daily Maariv, reporting includes statements from the Pentagon calling the deal an important step in safeguarding American national interests and sustaining Israeli supremacy. The U.S. Department of Defense is also quoted confirming that it will prohibit the sale of cluster bombs. Al Quds comments that similar statements were made by the U.S. military after 14 civilians in Lebanon were killed by cluster bombs during the first Lebanon war. The paper also reminds readers that the Israeli military has previously asserted that the use of cluster bombs allowed under international law and that cluster bombs were used in the second Lebanon war.

Al Quds' Washington correspondent writes a front page story about the financial crisis in the United States. The story outlines actions taken by Congress and presidential hopefuls. The reporter comments that the bail-out plan is not popular among average Americans who believe that it aims to rescue companies whose greed and unchecked misbehavior contributed to the current catastrophe in the American economy. Americans also believe that the plan does not directly address the problems of Americans who have lost their homes or are facing foreclosure, the article concludes.

Al Ayyam newspaper and Wafa report that Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas is satisfied with Egyptian efforts to achieve internal Palestinian reconciliation. Al Ayyam's front page story also quotes PA Presidential spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudayna stating that, "President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership trust Egyptian efforts aimed at achieving Palestinian national unity by ensuring a sustained calm, an end to the siege on the Palestinian people, and support for the Palestinian pursuit of legitimate rights to statehood based on the 1967 [borders]." Wafa quotes chief Palestinian negotiator Ahmad Quray denying recent reports that he questioned the success of Egyptian efforts and accused some Arab parties of causing the Palestinian rift. Quray is quoted as saying that he trusts the sincere Egyptian efforts to support Palestinian rights and unity.

Hamas warnings of a severe fuel shortage in Gaza grab front page headlines in Al Quds. The paper quotes Ahmad Ali of the Hamas "Palestinian Petroleum Department" in Gaza stating that this winter could see a severe fuel shortage when demand will increase for fuel.

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Ahmad is quoted stating, "although the Israelis have allowed for a very slight increase in the fuel supply to Gaza, the citizens will suffer because of the increased demand... current quantities of fuel supplied to Gaza constitute only one third of the actual needs for fuel for citizens."

Israeli warnings of a rise in violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers are front page news in Al Ayyam. Quoting Israeli daily Haaretz, the paper publishes comments by the head of the Israeli Defense Forces' Central Command confirming the increase in violence and warning that it threatens the Israeli military's ability to conduct operations in the West Bank. The official calls the increase a "dangerous phenomenon" that is causing significant damage to the image of the IDF and the state of Israel.

Al Ayyam's front page highlights comments by Israeli university professor Sternhell who was injured last week by a bomb planted at his home. The paper reports that Sternhell addressed a group of supporters who were staging a rally in front of his home against violence perpetrated by right-wing Israeli groups. The report highlights his comment that violence by Israelis against Palestinians will eventually be answered with violence against Israelis.

Headlines note that French Foreign Minister Kouchner will visit the Palestinian Territories on October 3 to discuss the status of peace talks with Israel.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1. Regular columnist Mohamad Yaghy opined in Al Ayyam under the title, "The peace process in the American elections" (10/03): "[T]he differences between the positions of the American presidential candidates regarding the [Palestinian-Israeli] peace process is somewhat unclearboth of them have expressed more than once, their strong support of Israel and their belief that Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel.....although the differences are not clear, Obama's policies seem to be more defined and ready to deal with the Israeli-Arab conflict. We see this from his list of advisors... McCain's policy, on the other hand, is not defined and is more likely to [halt] the peace process, which would even mean a break with President Bush's policy ... Nonetheless, there are Arabs who support McCain, why? Firstly, because some

Arabs... are more racist than many Americans and would prefer to receive instructions from a white American leader... Secondly, McCain has promised some Arabs, or so they think, that he will wage war against Iran and rid them of the deadly Shiite danger..."

¶2. Columnist Rajab Abu Sarraya opined in Al Ayyam under the title: "Reconciliation is better"(10/02): "[T]he Arab League should not be alone in raising its finger against those obstructing national unity, national personalities should also. It is high time to loudly speak out against oppressive Palestinian powers, especially ones that are shielded behind arms, their weapons trained on the heads and chests of Palestinians... anyone who cannot find a place in their political program for difference [of opinion] will not find a place among Palestinians and possibly not even among Arabs and regional states... He who does not have legitimacy should worry... military might will fade away."

Walles